R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 017 342 PS 000 746

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN, A HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE 6.

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSN., WASHINGTON, D.C.

PUB DATE 60

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC NOT AVAILABLE FROM EDRS. 42P.

DESCRIPTORS- *ELEMENTARY EDUCATION, *PARENT ROLE, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS, *STUDENT DEVELOPMENT, STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS, STUDENT NEEDS, CURRICULUM ENRICHMENT, PARENT TEACHER COOPERATION, PARENT SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP, ORIENTATION MATERIALS, *FAMILY ENVIRONMENT,

THIS HANDBOOK PROVIDES INFORMATION AND ADVICE FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE 6. INDIVIDUAL CHAPTERS OF THE HANDBOOK ARE DEVOTED TO THE VARIOUS AREAS OF THE ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM--(1) READING, (2) SPELLING, (3) HANDWRITING, (4) ARITHMETIC, (5) SCIENCE, (6) SOCIAL STUDIES, (7) ART AND MUSIC, (8) FOREIGN LANGUAGES, AND (9) HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION. ADDITIONAL CHAPTERS ARE CONCERNED WITH THE SUBJECTS OF HOMEWORK AND REPORT CARDS. IN EACH CHAPTER, AN INFORMATIVE INTRODUCTORY SECTION CONSISTS OF A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT PROCEDURES IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION AND OF THE CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND GOALS APPROPRIATE TO THE VARIOUS AGE AND GRADE LEVELS. THE INFORMATIVE SECTION OF EACH CHAPTER IS FOLLOWED BY AN ENUMERATION OF WAYS IN WHICH PARENTS CAN ASSIST PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS IN MOTIVATING, STIMULATING, AND ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TO REALIZE MAXIMUM BENEFITS FROM THE ELEMENTARY SCHOLASTIC EXPERIENCE. THE SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS, BOTH GENERAL AND SPECIFIC, INCLUDE RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING (1) APPROPRIATE MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES TO SUPPLEMENT AND ENRICH CURRICULAR EXPERIENCES AND (2) MEANS BY WHICH AN ENVIRONMENT CONDUCIVE TO ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE CAN BE FOSTERED IN THE HOME. THIS DOCUMENT IS AVAILABLE FROM EITHER THE DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS OR THE NATIONAL SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION, 1201 SIXTEENTH STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036 FOR $0.75. (JS)

ED017342

PROCESS WITH MICROFICHE AND PUBLISHER'S PRICES. MICROFICHE REPRODUCTION ONLY.

Teachers Advise Parents

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN

PROCESS WITH MICROFICHE AND PUBLISHER'S PRICES. MICROFICHE REPRODUCTION ONLY.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN

A Handbook for Parents of Children in Kindergarten Through Grade 6

Published by:

Department of Elementary School Principals
National School Public Relations Association

Departments of the National Education Association

PS 000746

Acknowledgments

How To Help Your Child Learn was written by Beatrice M. Gudridge.

Consultants who advised on the manuscript included Mary Endres, associate professor of education, Purdue University, and Myra deH. Woodruff, chief, Bureau of Child Development and Parent Education, New York State Education Department.

Concept and general content of the handbook were reviewed by a number of school superintendents, classroom teachers, parents, officers and members of the two sponsoring associations. Special encouragement and help were given by the president of the Department of Elementary School Principals, Vincent J. Dodge, principal, Roosevelt School, Fargo, North Dakota, and the president of the National School Public Relations Association, Clayton E. Rose, public relations director, New York State Teachers Association, Albany, New York.

Copyright 1960

National Education Association of the United States

Library of Congress Catalog No. 60—14673

Sixth printing—245,000 copies in print

Price Information. Single copy, 75 cents. Quantity orders at the following discounts: 2-9 copies, 10 percent; 10 or more copies, 60 cents each. Order from and make checks payable to either the Department of Elementary School Principals or the National School Public Relations Association, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D. C. 20036. Orders which amount to $2 or less must be accompanied by cash. Postage free if prepaid.

Table of Contents

		Page
What Is a Parent?		4
Chapter 1	What Goes On Here?	5
Chapter 2	Reading: Key to the Kingdom	7
Chapter 3	Spelling: No Cinch	11
Chapter 4	Handwriting: That's MY Name	14
Chapter 5	Arithmetic: A Numbers Game	17
Chapter 6	Science: The Why of Things	21
Chapter 7	Social Studies: A Small World	25
Chapter 8	Art and Music: Discovery Unlimited	29
Chapter 9	Foreign Language: *Bonjour, Papa*	32
Chapter 10	Health and Physical Education: Fitness, Inc.	34
Chapter 11	Homework: A Family Affair	37
Chapter 12	Report Cards: How's He Doing?	39

Permission to reproduce this copyrighted work has been granted to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and to the organization operating under contract with the Office to Education to reproduce documents included in the ERIC system by means of microfiche only, but this right is not conferred to any users of the microfiche received from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service. Further reproduction of any part requires permission of the copyright owner.

What Is a Parent?

Parents come in all shapes and sizes, and in both sexes (which makes it nice all around). In their earliest native habitats, they surround themselves with such artifacts as playpens, diaper pails, knitted bonnets from Grandma, large cribs, and small rattles. Later on, they are frequently found fixing mechanical toys, trimming Christmas trees, reading out loud at bedtime, and talking to the pediatrician on the telephone.

Most of the time they are sentimental creatures, tending to carry pictures in their wallets and hope in their hearts. At other times, however, they wear worried frowns and suffer from self-doubts which they confide to others of the species.

They may be observed soothing small wounds, answering questions, unzipping snowsuits, inventing bathtub games, and blowing up balloons for birthday parties. They can be seen almost anywhere — trudging through zoos, going on picnics, shopping in supermarkets, suffering through haircuts at the barber shop and shots at the doctor's office.

Just as they're getting the hang of things, it all changes. A stranger enters the family circle, converting it to a triangle. This stranger, called a Teacher, is admired extravagantly, followed slavishly, and quoted at length around the dinner table.

This Teacher, and *its* native habitat, the School, may require a whole new set of artifacts, such as lunchboxes, milk money, labeled clothing, big crayons, and paste pots. The School also expects its small inhabitants to be healthy; to know their names, addresses, and telephone numbers; to care for themselves and their belongings; to share and get along with others; and to be ready to learn.

Suddenly, the Parent realizes that the books he read aloud, the molded lumps of clay he admired, the time he took to play catch, the ideas he listened to, the questions he answered, the regular patterns for meals, sleep, and play he insisted on, the trips he engineered — all these were really the soundest kind of preparation for school. With this solid backlog of home and family experiences, the child can head for the new world of school living and learning with confidence and security.

Furthermore, the Parent soon discovers that, far from being out of a job when his child enters school, he is more of a V.I.P. than ever. This handbook tells him *why* he's important and *how* he can help, as his child travels from kindergarten through the sixth grade.

As the first graders filed out the door at dismissal time, the little girl caught at the teacher's hand. "Please, Miss Brown," she said, "will you tell me what I learned today? Every night, my Daddy wants to know!"

What Goes On Here?

Wanting to know what is happening to and for his child in the unfamiliar world of school is the hallmark of every parent. It's written all over his crisp or cagey versions of the question ". . . and what did you do in school today?" Part of it is a big sense of wanting to get his bearings, faced as he is at the dinner table nowadays with a small stranger who's either bursting with plans and pronouncements from the teacher or, equally unsettling, who's blanketed in mysterious silence about *anything* that may have happened between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Dad thought he knew this three-foot relative pretty well before it started school. Now he's not so sure.

But that's not all of it. He has a pretty clear notion that something is expected of him, too. He wants to know how he can help to *build* on what the school is doing for his child. Are there ways he can help his child to stretch his learning wings at home? Are there chinks in his child's education that the school must necessarily leave out . . . and that the family could fill in? Is the school a good one? And how can he find out?

If he's a "thinking man," his thoughts about school are colored by what is happening in the world as the decade of the '60's dawns — incredible breakthroughs in science and technology, along with the tensions of the cold war; a period of questioning and criticism, including criticism of the schools.

Some critics had a field day after Russia launched its Sputnik, lambasting the schools, charging that they were soft, lacked discipline, were turning the children into life-adjusted lowbrows . . . and that this was all the fault of some sinister species called "educationists." The schools were made to appear responsible for everything that was wrong with American society, from bad manners to juvenile delinquency, the high suicide rate, and the popularity of TV westerns.

But after a time, more responsible critics began to ask deeper questions. Were the shortcomings of America's schools really the shortcomings of American society as a whole? In the years since the war, what had come first with most Americans — the life of the mind, books, and learning, or

a new station wagon every two years? Had the kids been encouraged to make a hero of the man who could develop a sure polio cure, or the man who could make a fast buck? And who was it who turned the egghead into a square?

As the soul-searching went on, some valid criticisms of the schools emerged, and oddly enough, many of them were things educators had been saying for years — that a higher value needed to be placed on intellectual excellence; that Americans should demand more of themselves and more of their children; that a child in pursuit of learning is a working person, engaged in the most important, most exacting, and most exciting task in the world.

The intellectual climate IS changing, in society and in the schools, which both reflect and advance our culture. Experiments in curriculum, special classes, new uses for teachers and facilities are being tried in schools in every part of the country. In the fall of 1959, Washington, D. C., third graders were learning French; Kansas City fourth graders were learning Spanish; Norfolk and Louisville elementary schools were using radio and TV to teach foreign languages. The social studies curriculum was being rewritten in St. Louis; teachers in the Philadelphia system were emphasizing the spirit of discovery and exploration in a revised mathematics program; new science laboratories were being installed from Atlanta to San Francisco; Pittsburgh was beginning a longer school day; and there were serious efforts almost everywhere to identify and encourage academically talented youngsters.

Amid this ferment of fresh ideas, however, the schools were holding fast to their primary reason-for-being — to serve everybody's child so that he would, to the outermost limits of his ability, absorb the accumulated knowledge of the past, gain in an ability to use that knowledge, and learn to think critically and creatively beyond the frontiers of that knowledge.

But the schools cannot do this alone. And so we come back to the concerned father — and mother, too — who "always want to know," and what they can do to help.

He's often blanketed in mysterious silence about school.

The second grader arrived in class five minutes after the bell. The teacher wanted to know why she was late. "Well, you see," said the girl, "I was walking behind a slow dog."

Reading: Key to the Kingdom

Communication skills, it seems to Dad, is a pretty fancy label to pin on a group of school studies. He has never found Jimmy lacking in ability to communicate the need for a new fielder's glove or to explain as persuasively as the girl with the slow dog why his homework is not completed at bedtime.

If Dad stops to think a minute, though, he can perceive the logic of grouping reading, writing, spelling, listening, and speaking under one tent. These are the skills that everybody needs to achieve real communication.

They are good skills and every child wants them for himself. When he really discovers how to read, how to spell, how to write, he gets a good sense that now he "is somebody" with a magic passport to learning.

Most of all, he wants to learn to read. Listening to stories in the early grades teaches him concentration; poems show him word sounds that are alike; watching the teacher read from the board or chart as she moves a pointer tells him something astonishing — that you read from left to right! Visiting places together — a fire station, farm, dairy — furnishes clues for understanding the meaning of words he'll meet in books.

To lead him into reading, teachers often use these experiences by printing under a child's drawing the story he tells about it. The child listens in rapt wonder as his teacher reads the story, "We fed the yellow duck." She will flash cards reading "We fed" and "the yellow," encouraging him to find the card with the word "duck" to make a complete sentence. This is teaching him how to recognize words by *context* — supplying the only possible word for the sentence. As the stories grow longer, teachers call these "experience charts."

He learns the alphabet as he learns to read — not separately for reciting aloud. Actually, he will probably pick up names of many of the letters in the alphabet in first grade. Jim will write his name on the board in manuscript and thus learn the letters in his name, or the teacher will point out letters occasionally and name them for the class.

Second grade is the time when names of all the letters usually are learned. Spelling and handwriting are both taught in this grade in most school systems, and the child needs to be able to identify the letters as he tackles these new subjects. However, he probably will not be taught to say the alphabet in order now. That comes along in third and fourth grade when he's reaching out, getting curious about a lot of things, and wanting to dig into them. So that he can use glossaries, dictionaries, and encyclopedias, he learns alphabetical arrangement.

Phonics teaching begins early, when the teacher shows him how to identify words that *sound* alike (cat, pat, hat); words that *begin* with the same sound (big, bad, bear); parts of words that *look* alike (father, brother, mother).

In the second grade, he will probably learn the sounds of all the single letters, most of the blends like *bl, tr, st,* and also the long and short sounds of the vowels. But he won't learn these sounds in isolation from everything else. He'll learn them as he needs them and applies them in his reading. And he will go on learning and applying phonics all through the elementary grades.

As he moves upward through school, he'll discover new words through his reading and his other studies. *Satellite, laboratory, radiation* — these are science words. *Fortress, hemisphere, political*—these are social studies words. *Aileron, fuselage, propeller* — these are from the airplane book the class is reading.

With the help of the teacher, he'll develop speed in reading. Throughout the primary grades, the teacher works for fluency. When the child reads from blackboard or chart, the teacher sweeps her hand under entire phrases, guiding his eyes to take in whole groups of words at a glance instead of one word at a time. And in reading aloud, she'll encourage him to read "as if he were talking" — not laboriously intoning one word at a time. She also gives him opportunities to read quantities of easy, interesting books. The more reading he does, the faster his speed will become.

In the upper grades, he learns that he can use three different speeds for reading — an extremely rapid one for skimming, a rapid speed for narrative or nontechnical material, and a slower speed for reading *and studying factual* material.

The teacher surrounds him with books and reasons to read them. There may be colorful books in the classroom library to which he may turn during the day. Maybe there's a central school library where he can do research or just plain browse. Sometimes there's a book news section on the bulletin board where he can post notes and reports on reading he's done, or a special class time when he can describe extra books he's read. Or he may compile anthologies, write his own stories and poems, memorize poems he likes, design scenery, dramatize stories he's read — all of which show him that the world of books and reading is a real magic carpet for enjoying life.

What can parents do to help the child not only to learn to read, but to appreciate the treasures locked in good books?

■ Be sure he's up to par physically. Learning to read demands the best that is in him of effort, concentration, clear thinking. Have him examined regularly, and be sure his hearing and vision are perfect.

■ Keep him in school regularly. Every time he's absent he loses ground, particularly in the first and second grades when the foundations for reading are laid. If he has to be absent for prolonged periods, discuss with the principal and teacher whether you should have him tutored or sent to a reading clinic for catch-up work.

■ Refrain from comparing him unfavorably with some other child who is quickly picking up reading skills. Your child is himself, with his own personal, private timetable for learning to walk, to talk, to read, and to do everything else which involves a maturing process.*

■ Make your home a haven of thought, books, ideas. If the adults in your family are bookworms who enjoy reading everything from cookbooks to catalogues, he's very likely to catch the delightful bug.

■ Start a family reading hour which everybody can joyfully anticipate. If yours is a large family, choose a "reading-out-loud" book aimed at the middle children—the older ones will reach down a little, the younger ones will reach up to understand.

■ Let him have a place to keep his books, even if it's only one shelf. Whether or not he lends them out is his business. To some children, books are as personal as their clothes, and even more precious. Other children like to share favorites with their friends.

■ As soon as he is able to sign his name, introduce him to the heady delights of the public library. Let him browse there while you shop at the supermarket. Subscribe for a children's magazine for him. He'll haunt the mailbox when he knows it's the second of the month and "his" magazine is on its way.

■ A book in his hand should be respected. Don't call him away from his reading just because you've thought up a job for him.

■ Show the dubious child who doesn't like to read that books have some use for a real he-man. Not everyone wants to read about horses, or undersea diving, or girls in boarding school; but how about a book of magic tricks that

---

* For a more complete discussion on how children learn to read, you may want to check the following specially written handbooks for parents, all available from the National Education Association, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington 6, D. C.: *Happy Journey; Janie Learns To Read;* and *Sailing into Reading.* Each is 50 cents.

Show him how useful books can be.

any boy or girl can perform; or books on puppetry, soap carving, or weathercraft that teach you how to forecast rain or shine? There are books on *everything* if you look hard enough. Lead him into them by way of the other interests close to his heart.

■ Encourage him to make his own bookplates. Perhaps he'd also enjoy keeping track in a diary, notebook, or card file of all the books he reads in a year.

■ Before you select books for birthdays and Christmas, ask his teacher's advice. She will recommend fiction, fact, and biography that are tailored for his age group and his own skill in reading, and that dovetail with topics and times being studied in class.

■ Don't be misled into thinking that all good books have to be expensive. There are 10-cent and 25-cent books that are worth owning. You may have to do some detective work to locate them, but it's worthwhile if it helps start him on a library of his own.

■ Don't make a big issue out of comic books. Help him (without being stuffy or dictatorial) to see the differences for himself in the quality of the art work, the paper, the printing, and language between comics and good books. Work into the content itself, showing tactfully how the situations and stories in comic books are apt to be pretty unreal. If you can manage all this with the light touch, you will undoubtedly find that eventually he'll set his own high standards. And in the meantime, his sampling of comics will probably not hurt his literary taste.

The little girl appeared downhearted at the passing of September. "I just learned to spell it," she mourned, "and now it's gone."

Spelling: No Cinch

The dad who's a good speller (or thinks he is) can't understand why Johnny stumbles over "simple" words like *pear, again, right,* or *strange.* And if dad happens to hire a young secretary who occasionally slips on spelling, that's the payoff. "The schools don't teach spelling anymore," he proclaims to all and sundry.

It might mollify him a little to know that learning to spell English words is hard work. Johnny would have an easier time of it with Spanish or Finnish, which are far more consistent in their rules. About 20 percent of the English words Johnny is expected to learn to spell don't follow the regular alphabetical rules, and these are apt to be the ones giving him trouble.

Schools *do* teach spelling, of course, and in much more rational fashion than they did back in the gay 90's when elementary school spellers ran from A to Z, and first graders began willy-nilly with *aardvark* and *acrimonious.*

Spelling is one of the language arts, closely associated with listening, speaking, reading, creative writing, and handwriting. So in learning to spell a word, Johnny will listen to its pronunciation, pronounce it himself, read it, use it in written work, and use handwriting in forming the word on paper. Most schools concentrate on teaching a list of about 3000 root words that make up 98 percent of the words both children and adults use in written expression.

On Monday, Johnny's teacher may present, through pictures or simple sentences, the words to be studied that week. It may be a list of words related to other class work the group is engaged in. For example, if they are studying Indians, the spelling list may include such words as *arrow* or *horse.* Or it might be a list illustrating a specific phonetic principle with such words as *gray, player,* and *saying* to illustrate the "ay" sound combination.

The class will discuss the meaning of each word. Johnny will listen to

and say each word, noting phonemic similarities (speech sounds which correspond to alphabetical letter symbols). He'll think about the rules governing the word (and, alas, the exceptions). He'll note the visual appearance and sequence of letters in the word. Finally, he'll write the word by copying directly.

After being tested on the word list on Tuesday, Johnny will proofread and discover his mistakes, and then proceed to concentrate on words that tripped him up. Spelling drills, when not too prolonged, have proved useful for fixing words in a child's memory, once he understands the principle behind the spelling.

The real proof, however, that Johnny has mastered the spelling comes when he uses the word properly and often in his written work—book reports, letter writing, short stories, essay exams.

In spelling, a boy's best friend is the dictionary, as his teacher will be quick to point out. From his very earliest attempts to express himself in writing, she will teach him how to use, first, a simplified dictionary or word list, then more difficult dictionary techniques.

How can parents help along a child's spelling skill?

■ Make sure your child has no physical handicaps which may be holding him back—a speech defect, faulty hearing, poor vision. If you suspect anything of the sort, have him examined immediately.

■ "Baby talk" may be great fun for parents and doting uncles, but it's no help to Suzy in the real life of first grade. Make sure that Suzy hears all words clearly and correctly pronounced at home.

■ Give your child a sense of adventuring with words. Encourage him to keep a written list of new and interesting ones he comes across. Play games with words. Oral riddles are fun. For example, "I am thinking of a four-letter word that means *sharp* (keen). What is the word and how do you spell it?" Or ask him how many "happy" words he knows how to spell (*gay, cheerful, merry, smile, jolly*). How many "sad" words? How many "holiday" words?

■ If he thinks spelling is a bore, give him one of the books showing why it's important—and fun. *Petunia,* Robert Duvoisin's story of Mrs. Goose's skill in spelling, may help clinch in a child's mind the urgency of learning how to spell. And Donald Duck's encounter with spelling in *School Days in Disneyville* puts across a point. Ask your child's teacher or the librarian to suggest other similar books.

■ Give him his own dictionary, which he will use faithfully if "let's-look-it-up" is a well-ingrained habit in your family.

Baby talk is no help to Suzy.

■ Have him make his own dictionary of "demon" words that plague him. Get him a scrapbook and have him devote one page to each alphabetical letter. As he masters the "demon," he enters it on the proper page.

■ Encourage him to write frequent notes—to other children, to relatives—as thank-you's for parties and gifts. Check with him to see that all words are spelled properly and that the note is legible.

■ Capitalize on his interests within the family circle. One 8-year-old was fascinated by the flood of cards received by his family at Christmas. His mother granted him the special privilege of opening this mail—in her presence—with the understanding that he was to record the names of the senders and the city of postmark. He learned to spell the names of many American cities (including Ypsilanti!), and Mother got a ready-made next-year's Christmas list.

■ Parents, battle-scarred on the boxtop battlefield, know how avidly children watch television commercials. Turn this interest into a spelling game. Ask your child to name the products he sees advertised on TV and to spell them. *Aspirin, automobiles, aluminum, bread, bottles, soap, shampoo, shave*—the list is endless.

■ Play word games with him, such as Ghost, Junior Scrabble, Hangman.

When Karen, aged 8, went off to camp for the first time, her mother couldn't resist sending letters full of advice regarding ear-washing, sock-changing, vitamin-taking, and such. On her first visit to Karen's camp, she could see that much of this counsel had been ignored. She wanted to know why, saying, "I reminded you enough in my letters!" "I know you sent me letters," said Karen, "but, Mummy, I can't read cursive writing!"

Handwriting: That's MY Name

As every parent knows, the child is the original do-it-yourself man. Growth is what he is after. Not just growth in size, but growth in what he can do and how he can do it. That's why, no matter how many times he sees it in print or has Mother print it for him, there is nothing that quite compares to the moment when he writes his own name all by himself in enormous, straggly, beautiful letters.

It's another key to the kingdom of growing up and he savors it to the full. Ask the first-grade teachers who get these 6-year-old eager beavers, full of gusto and drive to learn the correct way of making letters and producing good writing. They'll tell you that youngsters at this age practice endlessly and with fervor their "manuscript writing," which consists mainly of circles (o's) and straight lines (l's). The child wants his writing to be perfect, and he works hard at perfection all through the first grade and on into the second.

In third grade, there is another exciting breakthrough. This is the time when most schools help him to make the change over to cursive writing, thus enabling him to master the mystery of the writing *adults* use. Now he's really living.

In these early grades, the teacher gives your child plenty of opportunities to practice writing words that have real meaning for him. On a visit to school, you might find him labeling classroom equipment, recording weather data, listing absentees, needed materials for a project, or directions for making a classroom mural.

The teacher will work constantly with him to improve these elements of his writing: *shape, size, space,* and *slant.* In the later grades, he'll work for *speed.* In the beginning he will probably write on the chalkboard or

on unlined paper with crayons or crayon pencils. For most children, these give way to regular pencils in the third and fourth grades, while pen and ink are most often used in grades 5 and 6.

Remember that muscular coordination will determine how well and how soon your child can tackle writing successfully. When he enters school, his small wrist and arm muscles are not so well developed as the larger muscles, and he needs space and materials to "spread out" in his writing. You can help him develop this kind of coordination before he goes to school with activities such as painting, rhythmic activities, work with clay, use of scissors and crayons, throwing and catching a ball.

As youngsters progress through the grades, they find many ways to practice their handwriting — in letters to pen pals in other cities or countries, notes to thank class visitors or to seek information from local firms or civic leaders. They pen invitations to parents and speakers for special programs, make written reports on books read, summarize science or social studies research, create original poems and fiction.

The parents of a southpaw will be glad to hear that nowadays his teacher knows a great deal about his special problems in learning to write. For example, she may encourage him to continue manuscript writing indefinitely because it is easier for him. Because he tends to hold his hand in an "upside-down" position to avoid smearing what he's written, she may suggest a pencil with a slightly harder lead that doesn't smear so easily. For the same reason, she may encourage him to use a good nonskip ballpoint pen.

Teacher is patient about misspelled words in the child's early creative writing.

The "lefty's" parents will want to work along with the teacher to discover her methods for teaching left-handed pupils how to place the paper, how to grasp pen or pencil, how to develop a natural-feeling slant.

There are other points about the school's teaching of handwriting that parents may not realize — for example, that manuscript writing is not a "baby" method of writing, but a very useful skill. In fact, it is better for maps, signs, labels, note-taking, and sometimes outlining. Your child, no matter which hand he uses, may not be ready to switch over to cursive writing as quickly as some of his classmates. If he is comfortable using manuscript writing, let him go on with it for a while. Most teachers feel it won't hold him back or hamper his speed.

Another thing to remember, especially in the early grades, is that children are impatient, imaginative souls. Sometimes their thoughts soar way ahead of their ability to write them down. That's why the teacher is very patient about misspelled words and wrong usage in the child's early creative writing. She'll be helping him right along to increase his accuracy without clipping the wings of his imagination.

What parents can do to help

■ Show that you think neat, legible writing is important by writing that way yourself—even in quick notes to the milkman. Your handwriting may be no thing of beauty, but anybody who can button buttons and hammer nails can write *legibly*.

■ Give him opportunities to use this skill at home with handwritten thank-you notes, invitations to his friends to visit, letters to friends and relatives, his own greeting cards and valentines to address.

■ Study the written papers he brings home and comment favorably on how he's improving (if he is) or discuss with him ways he can improve. For example, if he's a speed artist, you might suggest he slow down a bit, at least on second drafts, and take time to proofread the finished product.

■ See that he does his writing in a good setting—on a smooth, well-lighted surface with suitable paper, sharpened pencils, or a good pen.

■ In the early grades, a copy of the manuscript alphabet is always in plain view of the children. Sometimes the school sees to it that each child gets one of these for use at home, too. If not, you might ask the teacher to help you make one.

■ And a special tip for parents of southpaws: authorities have found that all children do more and better creative writing by using a typewriter, but for the "lefties" typewriter skills are a special boon in creative writing.

The student looked long and thoughtfully at the second test question. It read: "State the number of tons of coal shipped out of the United States in any given year." His brow cleared as he wrote: "1492—None."

Arithmetic: A Numbers Game

How much and how many, how far and how fast, how big and how small — life is truly a numbers game. There's Dad making the annual unpleasant discovery that he owes the Internal Revenue Service more than he had estimated; there's Mom trying to triple amounts in a fruit cake recipe and running into unexpected fractional complications; there's Junior computing the relative advantages of using his allowance to buy gas for the jalopy versus a coke-and-hamburger date with a girl who doesn't mind walking.

But modern life is demanding increasingly more sophisticated mathematical competence from us. When we consider our position on defense legislation, we may need to know that a hydrogen bomb has an explosive energy 20 million times as great as a one-ton TNT bomb. In thinking intelligently about space projects, we may need to figure out how long it will take to reach the moon — or the nearest star — if we travel 10 times the speed of sound. In deciding our stand on the international agricultural problem, we may need to recognize that every day there are 80,000 more people on the earth — and that in only 50 years the population may exceed the food supply to a serious extent.

Right now it takes mathematical know-how to find the cure for a disease or a depression, to build a bridge, navigate a jet plane, or split an atom. And who can predict how much more and what kind of mathematical know-how it will take to live comfortably and comprehendingly in the world 50 years from now?

In the elementary grades, your child is studying arithmetic, which is both a numerical system and a language for expressing quantitative relationships. He will master certain concepts, learn computing procedures, understand and apply the principles of arithmetic in grades 1 through 6, and thus lay the foundation for that literacy in mathematics which will be so important to him in the daily life and public affairs of the world of tomorrow.

Learning to use arithmetic, he finds, can be fun — an adventure. There's an exactness, a precision to numbers that satisfies his sense of the rightness of things. An adult may be satisfied with a car that goes "pretty

fast"; a child wants to know *how* fast. An adult comments that the United States is a fairly big country; a child comes back with "*How* big? Bigger than Russia?" An adult vetoes a purchase claiming it costs "too much." A child demands to know *how much* is *too much?*

A good teacher capitalizes on a child's curiosity and his urge to know *exactly*. She knows this kind of asking, probing, wanting to make it all "add up" helps the child to reason straight and to get used to thinking in quantitative terms. She will ask *him* such questions as, "What would happen if . . . ?" "Why is this so?" "What have we been assuming?" that will help him discover the principles of arithmetic himself.

The sense of discovery and exploration in arithmetic is being stressed in schools nowadays. Youngsters are being encouraged not only to master the mechanical operations of numbers, but to gain insight into the laws that underlie the structure of arithmetic and algebra.

Counting is the young child's introduction to arithmetic — something he may have already had practice in at home. He'll get more practice at school — counting out crackers for the midmorning snack, the number of days till his birthday, the number of blocks to his home.

In the first three grades, teachers plan the arithmetic sequence carefully, for the fundamental arithmetic operations build logically upon one another. Elements of addition are based directly on counting; subtraction comes next as the opposite of addition. Multiplication can be regarded simply as multiple addition; division as multiple subtraction.

Besides these basic operations, your child will get practice reading clocks, calendars, scales, rulers, which help him to measure time, weight, space. He'll learn to recognize shapes — a circle, a square, a rectangle, a

He'll be introduced to Roman numerals.

triangle. He'll discover the meaning of a dozen, a half-dozen, a foot, a pound, a quart, a pint, a gallon. He'll be introduced to the meaning and use of common fractions such as ½, ¼, ⅓ in everyday situations; and he'll meet Roman numerals. He'll write money numbers with decimal points. All this will be accompanied by plenty of problem-solving to sharpen his skills and increase his comprehension.

Grades 4, 5, and 6 will find your child taking on more sophisticated problems, using the four fundamental operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division in a variety of ways, with the numbers getting bigger and the fractions getting more complicated. These are the years of mixed numbers, unlike denominators, decimal fractions, mixed decimals, metric units of length, square feet, square yards, square miles. These are also the years of making graphs and finding the triangle, perimeter, and area of shapes such as the square and the rectangle.

What parents can do to help. There's a lot to learn in arithmetic, and it must be learned well. Happily, there are many ways parents can spark children's interest in applying arithmetic skills right around home. Here are some examples:

■ Children are practical souls—they like to put new-found knowledge to immediate use. So encourage your child to double-check your grocery tape to see that it adds up correctly; have him help Dad measure wood for the picnic table in the patio; encourage him to keep the mileage and gas records when you take an automobile trip. You may be astonished to discover that on his own, and because it was fun, he's spent considerable time figuring out the batting averages of some 200 baseball heroes or that he has less trouble than you have reading a timetable.

■ Start him early on an allowance and convey to him the idea that it's not a handout, but a share of family money for his needs and pleasures that is given him to manage. Then let him manage it! No fair being a snoop or a dictator.

■ If you are no great shakes at arithmetic and even secretly fear it (many adults do), try not to convey this attitude to your child. He won't go on thinking numbers, arithmetic, mathematics are fun if he hears you saying, "I never was any good at fractions," or "Algebra was the only subject I ever flunked."

■ Get him to list or to collect all the everyday things which can be efficiently understood and used only by someone with arithmetical know-how—a thermometer, barometer, automobile speedometer, rain gauge, weather map, measuring instruments, boxes or cans labeled to show amount of contents, recipes, house

floor plans, graphs, road maps, timetables, sales slips and utilities bills, savings and bank books, canceled checks, deposit slips, and receipts.

■ Give him fun-things to help develop his quantitative reasoning—number tricks, riddles, magic squares, brain teasers, puzzle books. If he's so inclined, encourage him to invent his own arithmetic games and puzzles to stump you or his friends. Play number games with him—dominoes or bingo.

■ Give him quickie mental drills on addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division when he feels he's mastered these processes. He'll enjoy testing his prowess, and the mental exercise will help him since most of the arithmetic problems he'll meet in everyday life will have to be done "in his head."

■ Help him see that our whole modern civilization is built on mathematics. Teach him to be thankful that the man who constructed your house knew how much concrete and steel to put into it so that the floors don't buckle when 50 people come to a party, or the roof doesn't collapse under six feet of snow. Look with him (for a change) at the *inside* of a TV set with its hundreds of circuits and their essential electronic elements—each one calculated by mathematics. Ask him to estimate and then to check by rough measurement the dimensions of his room, his house, his school, the length of a block, the height of a tower.

■ Get him used to thinking of things in numerical terms. What does a million of anything look like—a million pennies, for example? If you piled them in a stack, how high would the stack be?

■ And speaking of millions, teach him not to be afraid to think in millions and billions. In his world-of-the-future, he is going to have to deal with them in a meaningful way. Help him get the concept of bigness. What does a million really mean—or a billion? Counting as fast as you can—say three a second—it would take you three days, 24 hours a day, to count to a million; and over eight years to count to a billion.

■ Help him to see how skills in arithmetic will assist him in his other school studies—science, for example, where experiments may depend on exact measurements; or social studies where he will be concerned with land areas, food supplies, industrial production, populations, map-making, map-reading.

■ If he wants to be a scientist when he grows up, remind him that all the physical sciences are based on mathematics—from the biology study that developed penicillin to the physics that spawned a synchrotron.

The third grader burst through the kitchen door. "Sorry I'm late, Mom," he called, "we were making a science display and I had to stay to finish the universe!"

Science: The Why of Things

If Dad's science education ended when he learned to wire a doorbell, he's going to have big trouble making small talk with Junior about space launchings. Junior has a large edge on Dad — after all, jet planes, guided missiles, count-downs, hydrogen bombs have been part of his everyday experience and knowledge from the time he graduated from the playpen to the TV hassock. Dad, on the other hand, has been catapulted into the space age strictly as a Johnny-come-lately.

Besides, Junior is increasing his edge every day in school. From kindergarten on, science, abetted by his teacher, is helping him to discover the "why" of things around him. Such things as:

- weather changes (why does it rain? what makes snow melt?)
- fire and what it does (candles, campfires, gas burners)
- air and what it does (wind, waves)
- animals and plants (how do they grow? what do they live on?)
- tiny particles (molecules, electrons, atoms)
- electricity (where does it come from? why does it shock?)
- sound, light, chemical elements, and nuclear energy.

No child needs to be told that science is exciting — that science is "amusing," as Edward Teller has said. Watch him chasing lightning bugs, armed with a Mason jar, and studying them intently. See the loving care and attention he gives to every sprout on his sweet potato plant. Note the clinical gaze he turns on a praying mantis devouring a live grasshopper (you may turn pale, but he's fascinated). Step around a bigger child, sprawled flat, big encyclopedia nearby, as he painstakingly completes a drawing of a Brontosaurus dinosaur (he can spell it, too). Or note him at breakfast, momentarily distracted from the main business at hand by egg yolk on the silver spoon (he's been learning what happens when silver and sulphur get together).

In school his teacher capitalizes on his sense of wonder about both everyday things and out-of-this-world things. She encourages him to question statements ("Dad, who invented the atom?"); to dig into many sources for explanations ("Mom, when can we get a new encyclopedia? This old book

doesn't have a darned thing about astronauts!"); and to conduct tests for firsthand information ("My teacher says all you need for this experiment is some baking soda and vinegar and detergent — I'm going to show you how to make a fire extinguisher!").

In the process, he'll be helped to make accurate observations and to record his findings precisely; he'll collect and classify materials; he'll plan and perform experiments, advancing from the familiar in the early grades (ants, matches, bicycle tires) to atmospheric study, chemical elements, and animal evolution in the later ones.

In these years of science study, he should be gaining useful, organized knowledge which will help him to interpret the world of forces, changes, energies, living things, and phenomena. This doesn't mean that he will have only a collection of unrelated facts about how hot the sun is, how cold liquid air is, how fast sound travels, and how many legs a spider has.

It means he will have developed *understandings*. For example, the understanding that heating causes most kinds of matter to expand and that cooling causes them to contract is an accumulation of related facts that, put together, constitute a scientific principle. He uses this principle to understand why screw tops of glass jars come off if you run hot water over them, why bridges sometimes buckle in hot weather, and why pavements are sometimes bumpy on hot days.

Encourage your child to start a collection.

What parents can do to help. How can you broaden his science learning at home?

■ Encourage him to be a "collector"—of rocks, insects, leaves, shells. Provide a place for his collections, even if it's just a dresser drawer, soapbox, or shelf in his room. He's becoming a "specialist"—putting his own personal stamp on a body of knowledge—talking more, learning more about his specialty.

■ Get into outer space with him, if that's his current enthusiasm. Buy an inexpensive telescope and watch the stars with him; help him decorate his room with charts of the solar system—he may explore it some day!

■ Plunge with him into field or forest, if you're the outdoors type—and even if you aren't. Here are ferns to study, stars to watch, rocks to collect, flowers to pick—a whole leafy, living museum of science.

■ Take him to visit planetariums, aquariums, zoos, museums of natural history and science. Bone up yourself on what you're going to see. Read aloud about it in the car on the way.

■ Help him perform simple experiments in chemistry with such props as candles, silver coins, lumps of sugar, bread. You don't have to be a Glenn Seaborg —there are many books that clearly outline simple demonstrations of basic principles. Among them is *Chemistry,* published by the Boy Scouts of America as part of the Merit Badge series. One chemist father found that exposing his boy early (when he was only 4 or so) to experiments and demonstrations has really paid off. Although the youngster, now 9, is not a good reader, he will devour any printed matter involving chemistry or science, and he's been a regular smash hit at "Show and Tell" time in school with science demonstrations.

■ At Christmas time and birthdays, do a little probing to see if he'd enjoy a science-related gift. You'll need to know which *area* of science is interesting to him at this stage of the game. Close observers of children find that there is often a sharp division between children who enjoy biology-related activity and those who like games and gifts in the chemistry or physics field. Try to discover which way *your* twig is bending. If he has been chasing bugs and lizards, studying ants and spiders since the time he could walk, he will probably appreciate a gift in the biology field that he can enjoy at home—an ant farm, for example, or a microscope, a one-egg incubator, or a bird-feeder. Or perhaps he'd enjoy a beginning butterfly collection, a dinosaur kit, fossil specimens, or a miniature human skeleton with removable parts. If, on the other hand, he's always asking questions about electricity or how automobiles accelerate and why logs burn, he might be more receptive to gifts in the chemistry or physics area. You might consider a simple radio crystal kit, a toy planetarium, a magnetism lab, weather glass, chemistry or erector set, or an atomic energy computer. No matter what his specific science interest, he will probably benefit from a subscription to a

junior science magazine. In conversations with him, you may be surprised to discover that he's done a good deal of thinking on how he will use the gift that he may receive. One 10-year-old, for example, told his mother he wanted a microscope for Christmas so that he could study "pieces of skin." Visualizing dissections and other gore on her kitchen table, the mother asked warily, "What kind of skin?" to which he replied, "Oh, you know, potato skins, and things like that."

■ Encourage him to watch, and discuss with him, the many fine science programs appearing more frequently nowadays on television. Some schools are taking advantage of educational science programs now on the air and are beaming them to the classroom as part of the regular elementary program. If you have an opportunity to watch the same show in your home, you'll find lots of scientific wonders to talk about at the dinner table.

■ Ask the teacher and the librarian to suggest books on science that may interest your child—biographies of pioneers in the field, the "Allabout" books, or possibly a beautifully illustrated and authentic treasury of information such as *The World of Science*, one of the deluxe Golden Books. He may take some tactful "selling," however. One mother was just about to give up. All her wily suggestions about "maybe you'd like to borrow a book on science from the library" seemed to fall on deaf ears. Her 10-year-old son continued to bring home an apparently inexhaustible supply of books on "Biff Beagle, Baseball Hero." She was stricken dumb when he announced one day that he was headed for the library to get two books—one on electronics and one on ventriloquism!

■ Help him to develop the scientific attitude, bringing the scientific approach to bear on everyday events. When someone makes a broad general statement, challenge it with questions like, "How do you know that's true?" "Where did you get those statistics?" "Let's see your proof." Such a discussion sparks the youngster to a dogged tracking-down of facts. And it teaches him, above all, to approach all generalities with a critical "You've gotta show me!"

A writer for a children's magazine was struggling to simplify an airplane story into words a second grader could read and understand. She had just finished typing "One plane got gas from the other plane in the air . . . ," when her 7-year-old son peered over her shoulder to see what she'd written. "Huh," he snorted in some disdain, "why don't you just say they refueled the plane in midair?"

Social Studies: A Small World

Modern youngsters are a strange mixture of sophistication and starry-eyedness — knowing and naive all at the same time. One minute they can be distressingly matter-of-fact about a miracle like midair refueling and the next, be marveling over some fact their parents assumed they knew all along. Like the first grader in the suburban community who hurried home from school with a startling discovery. "Mom," she demanded, "did you know that Mt. Kisco is in the United States?"

Social studies brings out this paradox a little more clearly, perhaps, than some of the other studies your child has in school because it starts with things that *are* close to home — his family, his school, his neighborhood, his community—and eventually moves out to embrace knowledge of the whole world.

The term "social studies" sometimes baffles parents. Dad has a vague feeling it has something to do with geography, maybe history — he's not quite certain. And he's not sure he really approves of the whole thing. Why don't they teach subjects separately the way they did when he went to school?

One reason is that it's not so easy in today's incredibly complex and "interwoven" world to mark things off into tidy airtight compartments named *history, geography, political science, citizenship, economics, sociology, anthropology,* and teach them as separate "subjects" as if they had not even a nodding relationship to one another.

What good does it do your child to be able to reel off names of all the Presidents of the United States if he never learns what his personal responsibility will be toward putting them in office? And does he really understand the whole picture when he's able to describe flawlessly how rice is grown in India but doesn't realize there is not enough to go around and that people are starving there?

A child can hardly understand his own community — much less his state, his nation, or the world — unless he knows how people live and work in his town, what the climate is like, what

plants and animals flourish, how it's governed, what its history has been, and the special things that make it different from other communities.

Nor can he really understand himself in relation to other people and other cultures in a world grown very small indeed in terms of time and space. Today — this very minute — we can fly to China easily. But that's not the problem. The question is, can we *live* with China in peace and friendship?

The measles of the child down the street spread. So do his hates, fears, ignorance, prejudice. Disease spreads, ideas spread, wars spread; but so do peace, happiness, and good living.

Social studies acquaints your child with the world and its people and teaches him how and where he fits in. Through social studies, he will get a feeling of belonging to and responsibility toward his community, his state, his country, his world.

In first grade, he'll build onto what he already knows about his home, his neighborhood, pets, food, health, clothing, and shelter. In second grade, he'll spread out into the community, and you'll find yourself being interrogated or informed at length on the duties of policemen, firemen, postmen, milkmen, and other community "helpers." You may also start hearing about local factories and farms, transportation and communication facilities.

Third grade may find him thinking beyond the boundaries of your town to his home state and its industries, pioneer life in America, the Indians, people in other lands.

In fourth grade, he may move on to study ways of living in other countries, as well as to deepen his knowledge of his own state and country. He's becoming more adept, too, in the use of maps and globes, and may start lobbying for resources like these for his own room. This may also be the time, too, when you'll be pressed into service as a provider of flour-and-water

On trips, help her take things back to the classroom.

paste and vegetable coloring for a relief map of Mexico or South America.

As a fifth grader, he may be deep in the study of the United States, its geography, history, growth, the contributions of the Spanish to the Southwest, the English and Dutch on the East Coast, Scandinavians in the upper Midwest, and so on. He'll also be engrossed in learning about machines, minerals, inventions, as well as the great documents of freedom, the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

In sixth grade, he'll probably be up to his ears in European history and geography, life in countries of the Far East and the Western Hemisphere, and more sophisticated transportation and communication studies.

Although the sequence may differ somewhat in your school, the pattern described here is generally similar in most schools, in that it leads your child from the familiar and everyday to the larger world, always stressing the duties of a good citizen. Throughout the grades, his teachers will be alert to help him relate what he's learning in school to specific happenings outside of school — the news and current affairs. By what process did Alaska and Hawaii become new states? What country supplied the "space" monkeys for the satellite trip? Who are the candidates in the election?

In social studies he'll use skills he uses in other fields — locating data, making reports, speaking before a group, reading, outlining, summarizing, planning and executing class projects. But he'll also practice certain skills essential to this field. He'll learn to use maps, globes, charts, and graphs, as well as special references such as an atlas or the World Almanac.

What parents can do to help. There are many ways parents can build on the lively interest most children bring to social studies. As one father put it, "The school does the hard part, and at home, we transmit the part of the culture that's fun."

Here are some examples:

■ On trips, provide your child with notebook and pencil. Encourage him to draw pictures and make notes of things that interest him along the way—state capitols, factories, waterways, animals. Such travel diaries help him sharpen his sense of observation, and often make hilarious reading for the author and his family in years to come. Help him collect samples of things to take back to the classroom—Spanish moss, coconuts, and cotton bolls from the South, cactus from the West, shells from the seashore.

■ Load up on back issues of the *National Geographic* at your secondhand bookstore. Turn your child loose with them on the next rainy day. He'll read them, make scrapbooks and posters, learn about the world he's living in.

A youngster came running home from kindergarten and demanded that his mother acquire for him immediately a pair of pistols, two holsters, and a gun belt. "Whatever for, dear?" his mother inquired. "Surely you don't need them for school?" "Yes, I do," was his reply, "tomorrow the teacher is going to teach us to draw!"

Art and Music: Discovery Unlimited

Some children may have a special talent in music or art, but *all* children like to sing a little, dance a little, draw a little, "make believe" a little. In a world of wonderful colors, sounds, and textures, he has to try them all, experimenting in his own way, discovering, inventing. The smell of chalk dust, the ticking of a clock, a branch scraping a window, the feel of velvet — his senses respond to these, and as he translates what he feels into clay or paints or bells or movement, he finds that this, too, is a way to "be somebody," and at the same time, to be different from everybody. His teachers encourage him in creative efforts because they know that the more ways a person has to express what is inside of him, the happier he will be.

Art in school for the primary child may mean finger paints, clay, paper and scissors, big chunk crayons. These are the days when he lets himself go in imagination, and when he proudly brings home his efforts, hoping you'll display them.

In the middle grades, he branches out to a variety of other materials — linoleum blocks, papier-mâché, oil paints, charcoal, yarn, raffia, string. He's becoming very conscious now of form and texture, and he wants his work to represent truth. He may work along with others in the class on such projects as murals, topographical table maps, decorations for a Christmas tree.

In the upper elementary grades, he pays great attention to detail in his art and may enjoy design, map-making, and detailed pictures. He's choosy about materials, too, and may not always want you to display what he's done.

As teachers work along with him, encouraging him to experiment, they will also be exposing him to beautiful things that develop his sensitivity and appreciation of form, color, proportion —fine art from galleries and museums, reproductions surrounding him in the classroom, examples of lovely design in useful things, such as furniture, silverware, pottery, and lamps.

Music instruction, like art, starts as a delightful outlet for his inside feelings and carries him along to real appreciation, and sometimes, to skillful performance. In the earliest years, he discovers melody and tempo by playing clapping rhythm games, learning simple songs by rote (listening and imitating), using triangles, bells, cymbals, and drums to make his own lovely sounds. He learns to feel the beat (fast, slow) and the mood (sad, playful) as he hears recordings of fine music—classical, primitive, exotic, jazz, folk. He proceeds to singing rote songs following words and notes in a songbook, gradually learns to say note syllables (do, re, mi) in place of words in familiar songs. In the intermediate and upper elementary grades, he learns to read music, to understand notes, rests, musical signs, part singing. He also learns about individual instruments and, in many school systems, can begin lessons on the flute, the clarinet, and others.

She hopes you will display her art work.

Teachers know that music is not a special thing intended only for special people—a kind of closed shop—but that every child has his own ways of making and responding to music, and grows musically in his own manner. Good music is woven into the fabric of every school day through recordings, tapes, school concerts, broadcasts.

What can parents do to heighten their child's creativity and enjoyment in art and music?

- Give him real materials to work with at home—not coloring books or musical gadgets that he traces or winds or just looks at—but wood and nails, paste and paint, clay and crayons, bells and drums.

- Reproductions of good prints are plentiful and inexpensive. Turn kitchen, bathroom, his room into "art exhibits." You don't need to frame the pictures—stick them to the walls with tape, and change them frequently. You'll want to display his work, too.

- Begin the gallery habit, taking him with you for short visits at first, leaving well ahead of the time when restlessness begins to set in. Lengthen your visits gradually, but treat him to this experience often.

■ Jot down stories he tells, songs he makes up. Suggest he illustrate them and "publish" them in a book for grandparents or other relatives.

■ Use holidays as occasions to encourage him to make his own cards for mailing—valentines, Halloween, birthday cards. One family of four children, aged 5, 6, 7, and 9, made 200 Christmas cards, each one different, for their parents to mail.

■ On gift-giving occasions, let young children finger-paint gay designs on shiny shelf paper for wrappings, or crayon pictures on index cards for name tags. Encourage them to put their own decorative touches on dustpans, small boxes, clip clothespins, and pillboxes (which can be transformed into containers for stamps, paper clips, or bobby pins) which they can give as gifts.

■ At Christmas, show them how pipe cleaners can be twisted into little figures of Santa Claus, snowmen, reindeer. Or how nuts and shells can be gilded with colorful beads, small bells wired together for Christmas packages, and candles sprinkled with sequins. Ten-year-olds can make impressive mobiles using thin wire dress hangers, bent and hung with small tree ornaments and shapes cut from heavy aluminum foil. For these young decorators, you might point out the possibilities of disposable foil pie plates, lace-paper doilies, cellophane straws.

■ In music, let the child be a music-maker as well as listener. Bells, an autoharp, mouth organ, and drum can help him learn the rudiments of rhythm.

■ As soon as he's old enough to operate it, give him his own record player. If there is no good record shop near you, join a children's record club or borrow records from the public library.

■ Have music in your home—play your own fine records when he's around, study the radio and TV listings for musical treats the whole family can enjoy.

■ Take him to concerts—Christmas carol festivals, band concerts, children's symphony performances.

■ Don't over-organize his day. As one mother put it, "We don't push our kids all the time to be 'doing something.' We go along with Moss Hart when he says that if a kid is to be creative, he has to have some boredom to prompt it."

Three third graders stopped short in their brisk game of ball as a mother called from a doorway. "Adios," said one of the boys, "I've gotta go home." "O.K.," chorused the others, "hasta manana!"

Foreign Language: Bonjour, Papa

If *bonjour* and *au revoir, adios* and *si, si,* or *jawohl* and *danke schön* (in impeccable accents) are ringing through your usually monolingual household, it's a pretty safe bet you have a small linguist in the house and that he's one of many youngsters learning French, Spanish, or German in elementary school. More than 2000 elementary schools have some type of foreign language program—and many others are considering pros and cons of such a program.

Your child probably thinks learning a new language is great fun. A youngster aged 2 to 10 is curious about language, likes word play, and is a great imitator of sounds. Besides, unlike his teen-age brother and sister—or you—he's usually not self-conscious in bandying about odd-sounding words and phrases. For these reasons, many people believe the study of a foreign language should begin as early as possible in the grades.

On the other hand, if your child is not learning a foreign language in elementary school, it doesn't mean he won't be able to master one later on. There is evidence that if a person is motivated to learn a foreign language, if he is apt at this kind of learning, and if he has good instruction, he can be successful in foreign languages. This is true whether language is taught in small doses over a long period of time dating back to his early elementary school days, or in large doses over a shorter period at the high-school level or later.

If your child is studying a foreign language at the elementary level, his language class will not be like the one you remember from high school or college. He's concentrating on *conversational* Spanish or French and is not burdened with vocabularies and conjugations. His classes are probably short and frequent, and he learns the new language in the same natural way he learned his native tongue—by listening to, repeating, and using common phrases about his home, his family, his pets. He may learn to sing French or Spanish songs, play games or folk dance to native music, and follow directions spoken in the new language. His teacher will use picture aids, foreign language recordings, tapes, radio broadcasts, and her own excellent pro-

nunciation skill. The teacher's creativeness and willingness to experiment are extremely important since the "ideal" method of teaching appears to be a combination of methods.

As you talk with your principal, your superintendent, and your teachers as to whether or not it is a sound idea to have a foreign language program in the elementary school, there are certain things to keep in mind.

For one thing, the quality of the foreign language teaching program must be taken into account. Learning a few words, phrases, or songs in French does not constitute a real foreign language program. For another, there is a real shortage of well-trained teachers. Some persons who speak a language fluently are not skilled in working with young learners; others know a language "grammatically" but cannot speak it fluently or with accurate pronunciation. Also, the elementary school foreign language program needs to be carefully thought through and planned so that there will be continuity through the grades that will dovetail later with high-school instruction. A long-range program like this takes considerable planning and must be backstopped with money and consistent community support.

Perhaps you and your school officials would like to launch a study program to consider the pros and cons of foreign language instruction in the elementary school. Much information may be obtained from the United States Office of Education, Washington 25, D. C.; the Modern Language Association of America, 6 Washington Square North, New York 3, N. Y.; and the National Education Association, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington 6, D. C.

He's not self-conscious about odd-sounding words and phrases.

Suzy was proudly displaying the tooth she'd just pulled out. "You're going to put it under your pillow, I suppose?" said Dad. "Oh, no," said Suzy, "I'm going to give it to my teacher." "For heavens' sakes, why?" Dad wanted to know. "So she can donate it to the science laboratory," Suzy told him, "they're measuring how much Strontium 90 we're getting in our teeth."

Health and Physical Education: Fitness, Inc.

Strontium 90 may be news in the first grade, but toothless grins are not. Most children lose their baby teeth around this time. When your child enters first grade (with or without all his teeth), his body as a whole has grown to about 42 percent of its adult size, and his brain and nervous system have developed to about 90 percent.

His manual dexterity and hand-eye coordination in the grades will develop rapidly in the years from 6 to 10 to the point where he can use his hands and fingers for writing, drawing, sewing, and playing musical instruments. He has better control, however, over his large muscles—thigh, leg, upper arm—than he does over his small ones.

This "middle-aged" child needs a relatively large amount of food (as any mother can testify), plus lots of rest and relaxation to balance increasing activity and the demands school attendance makes on him. He needs chances to let off steam generated during long hours in school. Schools recognize this by providing regular playground periods and physical education instruction.

Early graders play simple group games like tag and dodge ball rather than team sports. Rhythm games and folk dancing teach them to use motion imaginatively, while using playground equipment teaches them to obey rules, take turns, play safely.

Later the child wants to excel in individual games—to be the best volleyball player or a heads-up first baseman. He studies rules, strategy, and lingo of his favorite sport with all the concentration of an old pro. He likes to compete with himself, too, in calisthenics and field sports. But all the time he is learning to be a good spectator as well as participant.

In school, he also learns good health habits. Caring for pets in class shows him the importance of good

foods and sanitary surroundings. Visits to groceries, dairies, canning factories spark his thinking on nutrition and eating habits. Posters in the school remind him of the importance of dental care, good posture, cleanliness. Teachers often use everyday situations to dramatize a health lesson. One teacher, for example, noticed her first graders loved to eat snow. She had them bring a jar of sparkling white snow to class where they watched—in growing disillusion—as it turned to dirty water.

What can parents do to help reinforce the school's teaching of safety, health, and good sportsmanship?

- Set an example by your own respect for good health habits and safety rules. Have your child examined once a year by your physician and twice a year by the dentist.
- Have plenty of healthful foods handy for those after-school snacks. Raisins, carrot sticks, apples, and oranges are a lot better than cookies and cokes.
- If you pack his lunch, be careful not to overload it with sweets. One teacher reports that of the packed lunches she sees, 60 to 80 percent of the contents are sweet foods.

Keep her at home if she has a drippy nose, cough, or fever.

■ Set a reasonable bedtime hour and stick with it. Teachers report that far too often the child is allowed to stay up late to watch a favorite TV show or to go shopping or visiting. Naturally he's "hung over" in the morning.

■ Train him in the arts of self-preservation: the safe procedures for dealing with traffic, health hazards, animals, strangers.

■ Keep him home if he has a drippy nose, a cough, a fever. Letting him go off to school in below-par condition hurts him and menaces others in the class.

■ Dress him simply, warmly, appropriately. As one teacher put it: "The little girl in her thin socks, brief skirts, and briefer panties may look cute in the car, but her pinched face is pitiful on the playground."

■ Teach him as early as possible to swim and bicycle safely. Encourage his participation in after-school baseball and other sports of the informal neighborhood type. And try to accept the fact that he may not be the world's best pitcher or batter. Don't dim his enjoyment of any sport by comparing his athletic skills unfavorably with some other child's.

The child, loaded down with an armful of National Geographics, *staggered over to her father's easy chair. "Daddy," she said, "will you look through these for a picture of a lady rhinoceros while I do the rest of my homework?"*

Homework: A Family Affair

Homework (kind, amount, frequency) is a fighting word to some parents. One mother says she "curses the day Sputnik flew." (She thinks her son is being overloaded with homework.) Another wants "my children to have homework at least once a week so I can check their lessons and see how they're doing." A third (after struggling for an entire week end helping Jimmy with a chart of the heavens) wonders wearily just who is being benefited by this homework; and a fourth confesses, "We want to help with homework, but we're afraid to!"

If you're like most parents, however, you favor homework, provided it's reasonable in amount, geared to your child's abilities, really teaches him something, and is of a type that doesn't throw the whole household into a tizzy.

Most schools take these points into account. You'll find teachers assigning children original research projects, perhaps to answer questions that come up and can't be answered in busy class time. As one third-grade teacher said, "Research of this kind is like a game. We have acquired information on everything from kraals and cantilevered porches to butter molds and grinding stones. When a child turns up a bit of hard-to-find information and brings it to class, we *all* beam."

Another frequent kind of assignment for the child is to collect information from you and the rest of the family. For example, one teacher asked the class to bring to school a list of all their family's arithmetic problems for one week (parents' eyes were opened on this one—they didn't realize how much arithmetic they used every day).

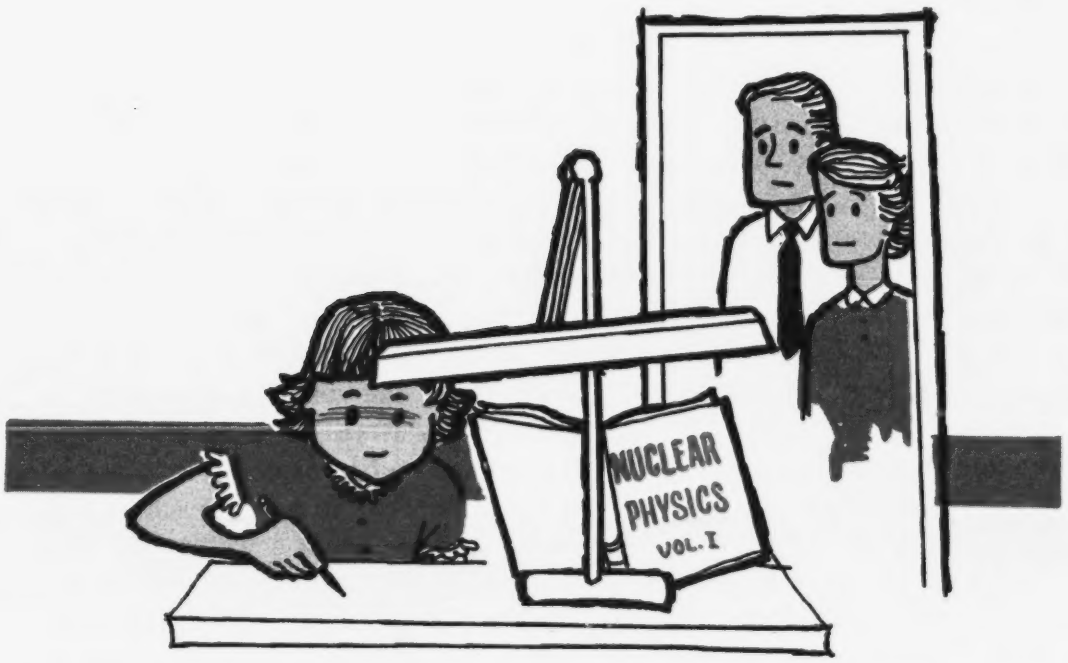
A third kind of homework turns up when children working on creative writing or written reports want more time than they have in class to elaborate on or revise their efforts.

In other words, most schools feel that homework should be an extension, not of the school day, but of *learning activity,* with assignments that can be done better away from school.

What parents can do to help.

■ You can help by giving your child a quiet corner that can be his homework island of peace and concentration. You may need to be firm, too, in eliminating some of the distractions that interfere with getting homework done—including TV and little sisters.

■ And if you don't understand the school's homework policy—and why you can help on scrapbooks, but not on subtraction—go have a talk with your child's teacher. She'll be glad to explain.



We'd like to help with homework, but we're afraid.

It was Parent Conference Week in the elementary school. As she walked down the hall with her teacher, the first grader inquired companionably, "Are we having Confessions again today?"

Report Cards: How's He Doing?

A child brings home a report card every day. Sometimes Mother has to turn sleuth to be able to read it, though. If he bursts through the door singing lustily, she can deduce that it's been a good day at school; and a little later, if she plays her cards right, she may find that he's going to read Amahl's lines in the puppet opera, or that he made A in a science test.

Figuring out why he's had a bad day—or a series of them—takes more than a "Spock" of genius, however. He may give it away in conversations with his friends ("I don't see why that old teacher gets so sore when a guy loses his spelling list"), or by the drawings and tests and written work he *doesn't* bring home, or by a chance remark that reveals he's floundering badly in some school subject.

Schools nowadays realize that you want to know how Johnny's doing in relation to his own ability ("Is he working up to the top of his abilities?") and in relation to others at his grade level. They don't leave you sitting there, stunned, with a piece of cardboard in your hand, wondering how he's ever going to get into college with a report card like this. Schools go to a great deal of trouble to arrange face-to-face conferences with your child's teacher that will supplement the report card.

You take to such a conference your own very special understanding of what Johnny is like at home. The teacher brings her insight into what he's like away from home. Everybody gains, particularly Johnny.

You may be surprised to find how much the teacher knows about you, especially if your child is still in the primary grades. She knows whether you're getting a new convertible or a divorce or a visit from relatives, when you're going to move, and where you buy your hats. She knows a lot about Johnny, too, and some of this information may be startling—that he always leads the singing, for example; or that he's keen on school housekeeping chores, or a popular member of class committees; or that he's nervous about reading aloud and always in too much

of a hurry to proof his written work.

She'll want your advice. She may ask you such questions as: What school activities does Johnny talk about at home? What are his play materials? Does he have any home responsibilities? What kind of discipline does he respond to? What kinds of things does he enjoy at home with the family? What do you consider his real strengths? Honest answers to questions like these will enable her to plan her teaching of Johnny more effectively, and will provide clues for you to work with her to help him over any rough spots.

The important thing for you in this whole business is not to take it too personally, feeling that somehow your own prestige is at stake. This is hard for most parents. Getting a report on someone as near and dear to you as your child is like seeing a snapshot of yourself (it never does you justice) or hearing your voice on tape (it doesn't sound like you). As a parent, you have a lesson to learn that is more difficult than any your child has to learn in school. You have to learn to accept your child as he is, and help him to fulfill his own particular potential, instead of expecting him to be a composite of the best of all children.

To help yourself develop more objectivity, read some of the excellent literature on the individual differences of children. All children do not learn to walk or talk at the same time; neither do they all learn to read or spell at the same rate. When you understand this, you will not always be nagging your child to succeed at something which is still beyond him, or comparing him unfavorably with others who seem to be going along at a faster pace.

Be alert to spot trouble signals. Study the papers, tests, and notebooks he brings home for the clues they contain to his progress. Take time to *talk* with him. One father, bothered by the fact that he never seemed to have any time to talk with his sixth-grade daughter, hit upon the idea of driving her to school each morning on his way to work. In the quiet of the early morning, he learned about the books she was reading, the social studies project, her small worries and big triumphs at school.

Let your child know that you expect him to do his very best in school, but don't harp about report cards as if they represented the last day of judgment. Show him you regard his report card as an important guide to his school progress, but that there are other kinds of "reports" that matter to you, too—the fine leather work he does at home as a hobby, or the generous way he shares his belongings. In other words, show appreciation of the things in which he excels. This is, after all, a world where many gifts and talents can find a place of respect.

The Publishers of **How To Help Your Child Learn**

The Department of Elementary School Principals of the National Education Association seeks to strengthen elementary education by helping elementary school principals improve their professional competence. Its program of services to members includes providing a variety of publications such as *The National Elementary Principal,* a yearbook, and special booklets; holding a four-day conference each year; offering opportunities for the exchange of ideas; and sponsoring an extensive program to improve the preservice and inservice preparation of elementary school principals.

The National School Public Relations Association, also a department of the NEA, joins forces with many other national groups to develop public relations programs and materials to strengthen school-home and school-community relations. NSPRA issues a variety of printed public relations aids; holds an annual Public Relations Seminar; and coordinates two national recognition programs: the Golden Key Awards dramatizing the importance of the teacher in American life, and the School Bell Awards for distinguished service in the interpretation of education.

Other Helps for Parents

Janie Learns To Read: For parents whose child will soon learn to read. To help parents understand modern methods of teaching reading, and how they can help at home.

Happy Journey: Preparing your child for school. For parents whose child will soon enter kindergarten or first grade. Dedicated to the proposition that going to school is a wonderful adventure for any 5- or 6-year-old.

Each handbook is priced at 75 cents. For quantity discounts, where and when to order, see "Price Information," page 2.